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DEPT FOR U/S KAREN HUGHES, NEA/ARPI FOR SHUKAN, NSC FOR  
MIKE DORAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/19/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [KISL](#) [SA](#)  
SUBJECT: SAUDI COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WARNS TERRORISM HAS NO  
RELIGION OR NATIONALITY

Classified By: Ambassador James C. Oberwetter  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: A headline on the front page of the August 15 edition of the English language Arab News read, "Kingdom Warns Against Linking Islam With Fascism," referring directly to President Bush's August 11 statement on the foiled terrorist plot in the U.K. The Arab News article reported that the King's cabinet (Council of Ministers) rejected the phrase, denouncing any link between terrorism and religion or nationality, while making no direct reference to the President's remarks. Nevertheless, President Bush's comment that the U.S. is still at war with "Islamic fascists" has sparked heated public reaction in Saudi Arabia, igniting blistering commentary in the Saudi media, on-line chat rooms and web sites, and conversations with Saudi interlocutors. End Summary.

12. (C) The President's comments ignited a firestorm of editorials, many of which question the sincerity of his earlier statement that Islam is a religion of peace. One Saudi writer wrote that "it is inappropriate to ascribe the vicious actions of evil-minded people to their religions." He drew comparisons to Hitler, Mussolini, and the IRA, stating that in following this logic, one must label Hitler a Christian Nazi, Mussolini a Christian fascist, and the IRA Christian terrorists. The Council of Ministers, statement said "what Islam is accused of today is a Western cultural product like fascism."

13. (C) The Ambassador recently attended a dinner hosted by Hassan Yassin (protect), a close friend and advisor to Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal. The Ambassador asked Yassin for his thoughts on the phrase "Islamic fascists." Yassin, with a sour look on his face, responded that "we know what year this is," referring to the upcoming U.S. elections. This reaction typifies the Saudi elites' understanding of U.S. foreign and domestic policies, but is wholly uncharacteristic of the larger Saudi public.

14. (C) Comment: One of Saudi Arabia's greatest red lines is what the Saudi people see as the desecration of Islam, as witnessed through the reaction to the Danish caricatures of the Prophet Muhammed. The public's discontent with regional events and increasing displeasure with the SAG's close ties to the U.S. have led to greater public criticism of the SAG. While King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, has not publicly expressed himself, his Council of Ministers has. In rejecting such linkage, the SAG is protecting its

heritage and distancing itself from such labels. End Comment.  
OBERWETTER